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AMEMBASSY OTTAWA PASS TO AMCONSUL QUEBEC

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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR JACOBSON'S VISIT TO MONTREAL, DEC 14-15

REF: MONTREAL 287

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¶1. (U/NF) Summary. Ambassador Jacobson's second visit to Montreal December 14-15 introduced him to several influential personalities related to Quebec's politics, business and culture. The Ambassador also found a willing ally on intellectual property rights with the Bloc Quebecois party and pressed the Consulate's landlord SNC Lavalin about a potential lease renewal. End summary.

Meeting with the Bloc Quebecois

¶2. (U/NF) The Ambassador had an intimate breakfast with the Bloc Quebecois party leader and key party members with ridings in Montreal. The Bloc Quebecois controls about two-thirds of the parliamentary representation from Quebec, and is the third largest party in the federal Parliament of Canada. The guests included Gilles Duceppe, leader of the party, and a Member of Parliament (MP) since 1990; Francine Lalonde, member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, a longtime Bloc and Parti Quebecois activist and member of Parliament for nearly twenty years; Claude Bachand, member of the National Defence Committee with nearly two decades service in the Parliament; and also Daniel Paille, a newly-elected economist with extensive knowledge of business, economy and institutions of Quebec, Canada and North America. The warm and friendly discussion shed some light on Canadian politics as seen through the lens of this political party.

¶3. (U/NF) Copenhagen was headlining the morning papers and Party leader Gilles Duceppe was eager to explain the Bloc's support for Quebec Premier Jean Charest's highly-publicized climate summit position, which was advertised as quite distinct from that of the Canadian federal government. Duceppe explained that Quebec was aggressively lobbying to accept the Kyoto Protocol's 1990 date as the reference year for carbon emissions instead of 2006, because the province's major carbon emitting industries had done significant retooling, largely in the face of a souring economy, during the mid-1990s and thus believed the earlier benchmark better serves Quebec's interests. Premier Charest also sought an entente with other sub-national players (e.g. California, Washington, Manitoba, Ontario, Ile de France) to gain recognition at the conference of their efforts and interests. Quebec was reportedly successful in joining a coalition of 20 others at Copenhagen with the goal to put political pressure on their central governments.

¶4. (U/NF) The discussion also touched on some specific issues such as International Trafficking and Arms Reduction (ITAR) compliance in which MP Bachand noted problems associated with a limited number of Canadian workers originating in suspect third countries and the long-term impact on U.S.-Canada defense manufacturing cooperation. The Ambassador regretted any negative effect on cooperation, but firmly noted that there was little change expected in such regulations. MP Bachand, whose riding borders both NY and VT, lauded DHS openness to him and thanked the Consulate for helping organize a border orientation program for him. MP Bachand noted, however, that border security still slows trade and travel. The Ambassador stressed that choosing between open or secure borders is a false dichotomy and that progress towards both has been and will continue to be achieved and that the U.S. had made many local improvements. The Bloc members agreed that the U.S. Customs and Border Protection facilities at the Champlain, NY port of entry and the pre-departure clearance facilities at Montreal's Trudeau International Airport are the newest, most advanced, secure and customer friendly in all of Canada.

¶5. (U/NF) The Ambassador inquired about the Bloc's position on intellectual property rights (IPR). Duceppe showed enthusiastic support for improved protection, asserted that key Montreal "creative" industries require adequate protection and requested more detailed briefing information on the subject from the Consulate. Quebec has historically shown a stronger support for IPR issues, both to preserve its "distinct culture" and to entice employers in software, entertainment and biotechnology research to move there. Post is following up on the issue through the Bloc's specialist on IPR issues, MP Carole Lavalee.

Meeting with SNC-Lavalin

¶6. (U/NF) Ambassador Jacobson met with Pierre Duhaime, President and CEO of SNC-Lavalin, whose downtown headquarters building also houses the Consulate General as its sole commercial tenant. The meeting touched on the possibility of a lease renewal for the Consulate, as well as other items of general interest involving this major international construction and engineering firm. Further reporting on this meeting will be done through other channels.

Meeting with Power Corporation

¶7. (U/NF) The Ambassador also met key members of Power Corporation to discuss the general business and political climate in Quebec and Canada. Andre Desmarais, President, and four key lieutenants welcomed the Ambassador to their lavish offices. Andre Desmarais is the son of one of the wealthiest men in Canada, with close personal and family ties to a long string of Liberal Canadian Prime Ministers (Trudeau, Chretien, Martin) and to the current French President Sarkozy. These interlocutors offered their insights into Quebec society and provided candid personal opinions to the Ambassador about the dynamic between Quebec and the United States, and Quebec and the rest of Canada. They conveyed the message that there were fundamental differences in both social and political culture between Quebec and the "rest of Canada" (or ROC, as it is often shortened in Montreal newspapers). Desmarais opined that no Canadians feel more affinity for the U.S. than the Quebecois, and that Anglophones generally feel more "threatened" than francophones

by the cultural and economic colossus to their south. These businessmen offered the uniform view that Quebec is open to even greater trade with the U.S., reminding the Ambassador and Consul General that it was Quebec's support for closer ties with the U.S. that proved critical for passage of NAFTA over the hesitations of the rest of Canada. Desmarais was quick to point out, as well, that "Canadian values" (by which he also clearly meant Quebec, as well) are subtly distinct from our own. This, he asserted, more than anything else explained the refusal of former Prime Minister Jean Chretien to join the military effort in Iraq and their willingness, up to a point, to play a role in Afghanistan. (COMMENT: The Desmarais clan is emblematic of a significant number of Montrealers with whom we engage who are linguistically and culturally francophone, but remain proudly Canadian and staunchly federalist in perspective. END COMMENT)

Other Montreal Meetings

18. (U) Ambassador Jacobson's attendance at a Montreal Canadiens hockey game was his first exposure to one of the institutions closest to the heart of Montrealers. Andrew Molson (co-owner of the team and director of the brewing giant, Coors-Molson) was the Ambassador's host, and introduced him to a variety of Montreal's great and good in attendance at the game. The Ambassador, accompanied by ConGen Montreal PAO and Canadiens communication staff, also dropped by the press bullpen to meet some sportswriters and observed the post-game press conference.

19. (U/NF) A coffee with social and political commentators L. Ian MacDonald and Bernard Saint-Laurent provided the Ambassador with more perspectives on political and social issues in Quebec. MacDonald is a frequent commentator for CTV and CBC and was a former speech-writer for Brian Mulroney and a Canadian diplomat in Washington. Saint-Laurent is a popular radio commentator and political analyst for CBC Radio One. Both men opined that issues of language and culture provoke strong emotions in Quebec. They also suggested that the best way to understand this emotional issue is to recall that Quebec is legally and officially a monolingual province, albeit one with a long tradition of linguistic and cultural tolerance - contrary to the sometimes alarmist picture painted in some pan-Canadian media. Saint-Laurent noted that while the general atmosphere was the most tolerant in memory, the perceived or real spread of English monolingualism, particularly in the west end of the island of Montreal, is causing growing concern among the majority francophone population. This only serves to remind that strong currents of linguistic discontent churn not far below the placid surface. They called attention to the moderate success of "the children of Bill 101" -- that is of immigrant and second general children educated in the French language alongside children of the wider Quebecois society -- who have by and large, they said, adopted francophone culture as their own and are successfully integrating themselves into Quebec society. Simultaneously, they added, youth from longtime francophone families growing up alongside immigrants are showing significantly greater tolerance and intercultural understanding than those of their parents' and grandparents' generations.

10. (U) Ambassador Jacobson has cleared this message.
MAYER